

RECEIVED

JUL 30 2007

Ravalli County Commissioners

--	--	--	--	--

Brandon Rennie
418 North 6th Street
Hamilton, MT 59840
(406) 531-7355

Ravalli County Commissioners:

I am writing to express my concern with the proposed re-opening of the quarry at Lost Horse Creek. I am a resident of Hamilton and I use the Lost Horse area for rock climbing, hiking, fishing, mountain biking, and camping several times a week, year around. I'm sure you are aware that the old quarry area comprises the parking and access to a rock climbing area that is regarded as one of the best in the state.

The proposed mining will affect the use of this area in many ways, especially for rock climbers. This mine may pose a direct threat to the safety of climbers using the cliffs. Given the steepness of the slope the rock extraction will be operating in, I believe it is impossible to tell how this will affect the stability of the cliffs above (to date, I have not seen studies looking at this aspect). Lost Horse has exceptionally solid rock, but there remain innumerable loose blocks. Any changes in the stability of these cliffs could prove life threatening to climbers on the walls, as being hit by rock-fall or having protection fail are very real and extremely serious dangers. The stability of the rock may also be affected by any major vibrations from rock crushing and other mining operations. For this reason, I believe that the re-opening of the mine should not be considered until there is serious investigation to this life-threatening possibility. In addition, due to the southwestern exposure of the rock faces in this area, climbing is possible year around, in fact, spring and fall provide ideal temperatures, and sunny winter days can be beautiful. The operation of the mine will severely affect access and use from October through April, some of the best climbing months. An operating mine will severely detract from many of the less tangible pleasures as well. The serenity and beauty of this area are among the biggest attractions for many users of this area (again, not only climbers), the impact of the mine on the inherent splendor of the area is blatantly obvious.

Perhaps climbers are somewhat at fault for the current predicament, for we have enjoyed this remarkable area in semi-secrecy for many years. However, in recent years this climbing area has become quite popular due to the outstanding quality of the routes here, and with the imminent publication of a new rock climbing guidebook, it is bound to become more so. This truly is one of the best areas for our sport in Montana, a state with great climbing. The proposed re-opening of the mine will be a major barrier to the use of this incredible destination that draws climbers from all around the northwest United States. Please, reconsider the proposed mine; surely there are better places to get gravel. Sincerely,



Brandon Rennie